

**Memorandum of Understanding
Between the Secretary of Health and Human Services
and the State of Vermont**

Whereas, influenza pandemics have occurred three times in the last century, and history and science suggest that the country and the world could face one or more pandemics in this century; and

Whereas, a pandemic can cause severe illness, death and disruption throughout the country and the world, and outbreaks can occur in many different locations at the same time; and

Whereas, preparation for an influenza pandemic requires coordinated action at all levels of government – federal, state, local, tribal – and all sectors of society, including businesses, schools, faith-based and community organizations, families and individuals; and

Whereas, the federal government has committed to taking a leadership role in creating a prepared Nation by monitoring international and domestic outbreaks, providing funding and technical assistance to foster local and state preparedness, stockpiling and distributing countermeasures, developing new treatments, and coordinating the national response; and

Whereas, the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has committed to holding pandemic planning summits in all 50 states, assisting states to improve their level of preparedness; and

Whereas, President George W. Bush has asked Congress for emergency spending authority to prepare the United States against the possibility of a pandemic and Congress has provided over \$3 billion for that purpose in the Defense Appropriations Act for 2006, including funding for state and local planning purposes; and

Whereas, States and local communities are responsible under their own authorities for responding to an outbreak within their jurisdictions and having comprehensive pandemic preparedness plans and measures in place to protect their citizens; and

Whereas, HHS may provide additional resources for State and local influenza planning and preparedness activities, and require specific preparedness goals from States and localities as a condition of financial assistance, consistent with its authorities and availability of funding; and

Whereas, preparedness plans must be continuously exercised and updated to make sure they work and to achieve a stronger level of preparedness; and

Whereas, pandemic preparedness will help communities deal with any type of medical emergency and will have lasting benefits for the health of our Nation.

Now Therefore, in recognition of the shared common goals and our shared and independent responsibilities, HHS and Vermont have agreed to the following:

1. HHS will continue to provide substantial guidance and technical assistance to Vermont as it prepares to respond to a possible influenza pandemic. Among other things, HHS will coordinate pandemic response activities with state, local and tribal public health agencies; support state pandemic planning efforts; communicate and disseminate timely influenza pandemic information and technical guidance to state and local public health departments; and provide direct support and technical guidance for epidemiological investigations and diagnostic services.
2. Consistent with its statutory authorities, direction from Congress, and Departmental regulations and policy, and subject to available funding, HHS will provide Vermont with an initial amount of financial assistance for the purposes of pandemic planning. Terms and conditions of such assistance will state that additional amounts will depend upon achievement of specific preparedness goals as agreed to by HHS and Vermont, including a self-assessment of readiness on the part of Vermont.
3. Within six months, HHS will review Vermont's plans for use, storage and distribution of antivirals and notify Vermont of its portion of the federal stockpile of pandemic influenza antiviral drugs.
4. Vermont will assure that the operational plan for pandemic influenza response is an integral element of the overall state and local emergency response plan that will coordinate effectively with Emergency Support Function 8, Health and Medical Services, of the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System.
5. Vermont will establish a Commission to oversee development and execution of Vermont's pandemic preparedness planning that represents all relevant stakeholders in the jurisdiction, including governmental, public health, healthcare, emergency response, agriculture, education, businesses, communication, communities, faith-based sectors, and public members.
6. Vermont will notify HHS of the amount of additional pandemic influenza antiviral drugs that Vermont will plan to purchase in coordination with HHS, subject to available funding and resources.
7. Vermont will make reasonable efforts, subject to available funding and resources, to exercise Vermont's preparedness plan within eight months of the date of the state planning summit between the HHS Secretary and the Governor of Vermont, and to participate in a nationwide pandemic planning exercise within twelve months of that date, subject to available funding and resources.

Dated this 12th day of January, 2006.

James H. Douglas, Governor
State of Vermont

Mike Leavitt, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services